

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes March 3, 2009

The Edgefield County Council held its regular monthly meeting at 6:00 P. M. Tuesday, March 3, 2009, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter St., Edgefield.

Members present

C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman
Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman
Rodney Ashcraft, Councilman
Gina Blackwell, Councilwoman
Norman Dorn, Councilman

Others present

John Pettigrew, Jr., County Administrator
John F. Byrd, Jr., County Attorney
Lynn Strom, Finance Manager
Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council
and others as per list attached

Chairman Kneece called the meeting to order and Rev. Jasper Lloyd gave the invocation, after which the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Agenda

Motion was made by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman Bright, to approve the March 3, 2009 Council Agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

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Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell, to approve the February 3, 2009, Edgefield County Council Meeting, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Reports

Under reports a correspondence from Mt. Vintage Development Co. to the Edgefield County Building Department came up for some discussion but the Chairman and Administrator stated that on advice from the county's legal counsel, no discussion could be held because this is in litigation.

Resolutions

Councilman Dorn made a motion to approve Resolution No. 08-09-311, "A Resolution Honoring Wounded Military Veterans by the Silver Star Families of America." The motion was seconded by Councilman Ashcraft, and the motion carried unanimously.

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New Business

Scanning System for the Voter Registration and Elections Office

Mr. Kurt Mayer with Advanced Imaging Systems addressed council concerning a scanning system for the Voter Registration and Elections office. Bob Ramsey, Election Commission member, explained that the Election Commission/Voter Registration has included in its budget request for the coming year provisions for some type of a scanning system they can use to record documentation in that office. (He showed sheets that are in terrible condition from being in file folders and handled.) They have no permanent back-up in storing files.

Mr. Mayer presented a proposed digital system that he feels could accommodate the Voter Registration office. This system would scan, index, and store records in a safe, secure location for easy retrievable using a flexible software solution. Also included would be installation, training and on-going software and hardware support.

Dock Drive

Mr. John Byrum, a resident of Dock Drive, addressed council. Three tenths of this road, which runs from the beginning of Dock Drive to the entrance of Stevens Creek parking ramp, has previously been accepted by the county for maintenance. The remaining two tenths of Dock Drive, which is a private road, have not been accepted by the county for maintenance since it does not meet county standards. All of the residents have given their permission for the 50 -66 ft. right-of-way to the county. Safety is an issue, and we are asking the county to widen the road so it will be safe (the three tenths of the road that is the county's).

Mr. Byrum's request of the county: "We are asking the Edgefield County Council and the Transportation Committee to update our point ranking and address the safety concerns. We also request that the remaining two tenths of Dock Drive be taken over by the county for maintenance."

The chairman explained to Mr. Byrum the county cannot do anything on the private part until we have the proper documentation and the road is brought up to county standards for acceptance by the county. When the road is brought up to county standards, then it has to be approved by the Planning Commission and presented to County Council for acceptance.

County Airport Hangar Revenue.

Chairman Kneece made a motion that the airport revenue be deposited into an airport escrow account to be used as county council sees fit. Motion was seconded by Councilman Dorn and the motion carried unanimously.

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U. S. Forest Service Agreement.

Mr. Edgar Hedgecock, Forest Service Engineer, U. S. Forest Service, came before council to discuss the *Road Use Agreement* between the U. S. Forest Service and Edgefield County (which has been updated). This agreement goes back to 1978 which means that we have been cooperating with Edgefield County for quite some time. The reason we have this Road Use Agreement is that for us to be able to spend federal dollars on any other activities, such as county roads, we have to have an agreement with that entity as a cooperator. Naturally, anytime we have an impact on Edgefield County roads, being a good neighbor, we like to take care of that and help you out. Of course, I know everyone recognizes that timber is our greatest impact – although it isn't like it used to be, we still have an impact.

We also have a number of other impacts as visitors in the Forks area on trails. People especially out of Augusta use that heavily; our recreation area-Lick Fork and of course the hunting impact in the fall. We feel this is a benefit to the county for us (Forest Service) to help you out on these roads where we are impacting the maintenance on these roads. The Forest Service appreciates the county's help on maintaining some roads where private residents impact the area. Motion was made by Chairman Kneece, seconded by Councilman Dorn, to approve the Road Use Agreement between the U. S. Forest Service and Edgefield County. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Tax Board of Appeals appointments.

There are three appointments to be made to the Tax Board of Appeals, one name being presented to council by Councilman Ashcraft: Daniel R. Bergtholdt. The motion to approve the appointment of Daniel R. Bergtholdt to the Tax Board of Appeals was made by Councilman Ashcraft, seconded by Chairman Kneece. Motion carried unanimously. There are two remaining vacancies, one at large and one from Councilman Dorn's district.

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Chairman Kneece, to approve the re-appointment of the following to the Tax Board of Appeals. They have agreed to continue serving on the Board: Odell Glover, Henry Black, Ralph McFarland, and Jimmy Hayward. Motion carried unanimously.

North Tower update.

In January, Mike Casey stated, he talked about a couple of grants that were competitive grants nation wide and the fact that both of those were time sensitive. One grant consisted of funds to help with the construction of an emergency operations center within the body of the re-built county offices that burned. Since there was no decision made on a new building we abandoned that particular grant which was due in by late this month (March

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31). A second grant was on a weather warning system (we have a partial system). The overriding decision not to pursue the grant was that we have been informed by State Emergency Management that we have received a guaranteed grant for use on construction of a new tower at the North site. As council remembers, that tower has passed its age by about five or six years. We have spent about \$10,000 to prop it up so we could move forward and buy a little time. That time has expired.

The state has notified us that we could receive approximately \$50,000 if we match that at 50-50 then we have just under \$100,000 available towards the North tower replacement. This tower at the old county landfill (Weaver Road) is sitting on landfill land that is sinking. It has previously been discussed that the county, at present, has a portion of land there that right now is not being used. There are some trees that possibly could be cut to add to the “kitty” toward the cost of this project.

The money that has been used or has been committed so far on this project will expire at the end of this month. Two new transmitter buildings will be delivered on Thursday of this week and we will also be installing two new generators, one at each site (North and South). They are of a higher capacity that will be able to handle any growth that we might have. When we could not get sufficient funds to build the tower we said we would just go ahead and build the necessary surrounding infrastructure for these two sites. These two sites serve all of Edgefield County: fire, law enforcement, EMS, and county government radio frequencies, which is very important. These towers are part of the critical core of emergency services provided to citizens.

I have been here a lot and it is because I attach a great deal of significance to these projects, both north and south towers. The north tower is old and time to replace it. That is not just me (Mike) saying it. It comes from John Riley (Riley Communications) that put the tower up many years ago. In January of last year Riley did some rehab work to the tower and stated at that time we had about eighteen months on the tower. Of course this does not mean it will fall the day after eighteen months. But it has passed its life expectancy and it is overloaded. There is more two-way equipment on it than what it was originally designed for.

In essence what I am saying is that we have about \$50,000 coming from the state (based on performance). It is not competitive. We do not have to compete with other counties or states for the funds. It is earmarked specifically for Edgefield County Emergency Management for tower/maintenance construction. Council would have to match dollar for dollar and if so we could put roughly \$100,000 toward replacing the north tower. I don't know the exact cost to replace the tower. I would just like to go ahead and start some type of engineering study probably with Mr. Riley to make sure that tract of land is workable (I believe it is). It is lower but the difference can be made up by adding height to the

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tower. We need to find out what size tower will work now to support what we have and also carry us into the coming years for any growth potential -800 trunking is becoming popular. We would move the tower about a quarter to half a mile from the present site. We will no doubt have to go through the Federal Aviation Administration for them to do an aeronautical study to make sure the tower is not a hazard to air navigation, and this can take considerable time.

I am asking council's endorsement on moving ahead with this project. I cannot go any further without council being in agreement with me because there can be some serious dollars spent.

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell, to move forward on this project. Motion carried unanimously.

Edgefield County Airport update.

Linda Anderson stated that before the next county council meeting the scheduled Marine's Special Operations Training will be taking place. It will start at the airport, April 3rd, 4th, 8th, and the 12th. The administrator stated that the Marine Corp said they would contact all of the law enforcement divisions concerning the training.

Administrator's Report.

The State House Ways and Means Committee has cut Local Government Funding across the state by \$122 million and the impact on Edgefield County is \$621,000. That will be going to the House floor next week. This past week we were in Columbia for a Mid-Year Conference of the Association of Counties and all the county officials across the state are working to try to overturn that decision by the Ways and Means Committee. We have started the budget process here in Edgefield County and receiving the budget requests from the department heads and various outside entities. We will have our first budget work session on March 17th and the first reading of the budget on April 7th. If any of you have any influence with any of the members of the State Legislature we would appreciate any good word for the Local Government Fund being restored because that could be very crippling to some services the county provides if that full cut amount is allowed to stand.

Earlier today Councilman Ashcraft and Councilman Bright and myself, met with Ms. Doris Jones with the U. S. Census 2010 of which she is a partnership coordinator. I have handed out material to each councilman that she left. The focus of her presentation to us was the formation of a complete count committee, and she asked that county council appoint citizens from various areas of the county representing various groups of the county to serve on this committee to get the word out about the 2010 census. She asked that this be done at the next council meeting. She apologized for not being able to attend the meeting tonight. Mr. Pettigrew asked council members to please think of individuals

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to serve on the complete count committee.

On the recreation program the basketball season has been completed. Soccer begins next week – there are 13 teams. At the same time, baseball and girls softball will be starting at the end of this month, which there will be 31 teams.

Councilwoman Blackwell asked for a budget for the new fiscal year without non-governmental agencies and a budget with non-governmental agencies. She would like to compare. Mr. Pettigrew stated that it had been discussed to provide several alternatives to the budget.

Guests

John L. Settles signed up to address council. He asked about a grant that Liberty Springs Recreation Park may be eligible for and he wanted to know the status of it (grant). The administrator said there was a grant through the USDA that we had hoped to apply for but Edgefield County was not eligible because we do not own the property. Ms Benson who works with USDA found out about a grant that she hoped would help to obtain bleachers. She applied for it for us and was turned down. There has been no grant awarded for the Northside Park. We do have a little money set aside for the PARD funding for the Park but there is no grant at this point. Councilman Dorn and I were at the park this week as they were trying to find an area that would perk for a septic tank and the land will just not perk.

Rev. J. R. Hooper asked to speak. Rev. Hooper serves on the Edgefield County Tax Board of Appeals. He addressed council concerning the fact that he felt the poor are being discriminated against because their taxes are not being reduced as the taxes of the rich are being reduced 25 – 50 percent. He wanted to know if council had any guidelines to go by but council responded that he should be presented with the guidelines since he serves on the Tax Board of Appeals. Council asked Mr. Hooper to gather information referring to his claim and bring to council.

The administrator explained the appeals process. “You begin with the assessor (written on your tax bill.) Go to the assessor if you wish to appeal. What you are appealing is the fair market value of that property. The assessor would present her case of why the fair market value is what she says it is and then the individual would present his or her case for why that person thinks the fair market value is different. That can be appraisals, adjoining property, any evidence that the person has to show why they do not think their property is what the assessor’s office says it is.

Mr. Hooper did not realize the administrator had been contacted by the Assessor, Keisha Bryant, that he did not wish to serve another term on the Tax Board of Appeals. He stated he would like to continue serving. Motion was made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by

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Councilman Bright, to have Mr. Hooper serve another term on the EC Tax Board of Appeals. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Councilman Dorn to go in to executive session pursuant to Code Section 30-4-70 (a) (2) of the SC Code of Laws 1976, as amended, concerning (1) a legal briefing and (2) a possible property acquisition, returning to regular session at the discretion of the Chairman. Motion carried unanimously.

Returning to regular session the chairman announced that council would not pursue any further the Calliham property.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Dorn.

Claims approved as follows:

A. **PAYROLL: 1/26/09 thru 2/8/09**

Regular.....\$227,904.48

B. **PAYROLL: 2/9/09 thru 2/22/09**

Regular.....\$228,033.09

B. **General Operating.....\$575,374.06**

There being no further business, Councilman Dorn made the motion to adjourn. A budget work session is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17th at 6:00 P. M. and the next regular council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7th, both to be held in the council chambers.

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Regenia Blackwell, Councilwoman

Norman Dorn, Councilman

ATTEST

Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council